

Sanitary Commission.

[Confidential.]

[Printed for Members only.]

## REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

WITH REGARD TO THE PROBABLE ORIGIN OF THE RECENT

Demoralization of the Volunteer Army at Washington,

AND THE

DUTY OF THE SANITARY COMMISSION

WITH REFERENCE TO

CERTAIN DEFICIENCIES IN THE EXISTING ARMY ARRANGEMENTS,  
AS SUGGESTED THEREBY.

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Read before the Commission September 5th. Referred to the Committee of Enquiry, and ordered  
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# REPORT

ON THE

## DEMORALIZATION OF THE VOLUNTEERS.

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WASHINGTON, *Sept.* 5, 1861.

TO THE SANITARY COMMISSION:

GENTLEMEN: As soon as practicable after the battle of Bull's Run, a series of seventy-five enquiries was prepared, intended to elicit information as to the condition of the troops before, during, and after the engagement, and as to the defects in the mode of providing for the necessities of the army which had been manifested in the series of movements which were connected with it. These questions were placed in the hands of the seven inspectors of the Commission, who were then employed in visiting the regiments which had been engaged, for the purpose of ascertaining and administering to their wants, and they were instructed to obtain answers to them, which would represent as nearly as possible the knowledge and judgment of the most intelligent officers and surgeons of these regiments with whom they were able to confer. They were to present themselves for this purpose in their official capacity, with authority from the Secretary of War to obtain information in all respects with regard to the sanitary condition of the forces, and were to make their return to the Secretary of the Commission, with such expressions of their own judgment as to the credibility of the statements, and such record of their own observations, and of other information obtained, as would aid him in arriving at the truth.

The returns received comprise about two thousand items of evidence with reference to the history of the battle, and have a certain value otherwise than from a medical or sanitary point of view. The largest part of them were collected by physicians and

examiners of life insurance companies, accustomed to an exact and searching method of inquiry.\*

These items, after having been carefully studied and culled of those which bore internal evidence of error or carelessness, have been digested and tabulated by E. B. Elliott, Esq'r, a gentleman recently employed by the Boston Life Insurance Companies, as an actuary for scrutinizing and arranging evidence with regard to the laws of mortality, and author of several papers on this subject published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the American Academy. The complete tables are on file in the office of the Commission.

The following are the results which have the most obvious, immediate practical bearing :

#### EXTENT OF THE FIELD OF OBSERVATION.

Portions of each of the twelve brigades under the command of Major General McDowell, at the time of the general advance of July 16, were visited by the inspectors.

The entire number of bodies of troops visited was thirty.

Of the twelve brigades comprising the army of the Potomac, seven only crossed the stream known as Bull Run, on the occasion of the engagement of Sunday, July the 21st, and took any active part in the main action with the enemy.

Certain regiments that crossed the stream and took important part in the action of the 21st, (as, for instance, the 69th and the 71st, New York State Militia,) were removed from Washington to be mustered out of service so soon after the battle, that no reports were obtained from them.

Concerning several of the regiments visited, replies were obtained to the entire series of seventy-five questions proposed; concerning others, replies were obtained to but a portion of the series—the defect being due in some instances to neglect on the part of inspectors, in others, to inability on the part of the regimental officers consulted to give the information desired.

#### SKIRMISH OF THE 18TH.

From the reports of the inspectors, confirmed by the official reports of officers commanding, it appears that of twenty-nine bodies of soldiers visited, four were actively engaged in the “demonstration” of the 18th of July, (Thursday,) at Blackburn’s

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\* Messrs. Robert Tones, M. D., J. H. Douglas, M. D., Philip Aigner, M. D., Wm. P. Buel, M. D., C. L. Brace, Frederick N. Knapp, and E. B. Elliott.

Ford, (across the Bull Run,) three others were engaged, but not actively, and twenty-two were not engaged.\*

#### ENGAGEMENT OF THE 21st.

Of the same twenty-nine bodies of troops, twenty were actively engaged in the battle of the 21st of July, (Sunday,) seven were engaged, but not actively, and two were not engaged.

#### CAMP GUARD.

The average number left as camp-guard at the time of the general advance, previous to the engagements of the 18th and 21st, from each of nineteen regiments reporting on this point, was sixty-eight, (more exactly, 68.2.) From ten of the twenty-nine regiments visited, no report was made as to the number so left. The smallest number so left behind by any regiment was thirteen; the largest number so left, one hundred and fifty.

#### STRENGTH OF REGIMENTS.

The average number of troops that marched for the battle field at the time of the general advance, from each of twenty regiments reporting on this point, was (as stated by their officers) eight hundred and two;† nine of the twenty-nine bodies of troops visited not reporting. The smallest number so marching was six hundred, the largest number nine hundred and fifty-one.

#### LAST MEAL.

The last meal before the battle of the 21st, of sixteen of the twenty-nine regiments, was on the evening of the day before; that is, on the evening of the 20th. Six regiments had a regular breakfast early (that is, before 2½ o'clock) on the morning of the day of the battle; two regiments breakfasted at six, and the battalion of United States infantry is reported to have enjoyed a regular meal in the woods about eleven a. m. The time of the last regular meal of three regiments is not reported, but there is reason for stating it to have been about 6 a. m.

#### FIRST MOVEMENT ON THE 21st.

The troops, except those in the reserve, were aroused from

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\* The thirtieth body, previously referred to, was Blenker's Brigade, which also was not engaged, and which is for the present disregarded, because the returns from it are more imperfect than the average.

† This is believed to be somewhat over estimated.

sleep between the hours of one and two o'clock on the morning of the battle of July the 21st, the march being ordered to commence with some at two, with others at half-past two.\*

#### THE COMMISSARIAT.

The troops had all been supplied at about 3 p. m., on the 16th of July, with three days' rations in their haversacks, "which should have lasted them to the afternoon of the 19th." [See Report of Captain Clark, Commissary of Subsistence.] And again, in a circular from headquarters, dated at Centreville, July 20th, 1861, an equal distribution of the subsistence stores on hand was required to be immediately made to the different companies of each division. In accordance with this last-mentioned order, "160,000 complete rations were received by the army at and in the vicinity of Centreville—sufficient for its subsistence five days." (Hence there appears to have been a short interval unprovided for.)

According to the reports made to the inspectors, few companies complied fully with these orders: twenty-six of the twenty-nine regiments visited took at least a partial supply, say from one to three days' rations, under the former order; two regiments, it is said, taking "no supply," depending for food upon "forage." An insufficient supply in one case was accounted for by the statement that "they had no expectation of being called to march;" (that is, therefore did not obey the order.) In several instances it is stated that the supply of three days' rations taken by the troops was "exhausted before the close of the second day;" that is, the rations were wasted. These confessions of neglect or improvidence on the part of the volunteers are confirmed by the report of Commissary Clarke, in which it is stated that after the distribution had been properly made to the several divisions, he (Captain Clarke) knew "of several instances in which subsistence stores remained in possession of division and brigade commissaries, and of others in which provisions were left on the ground of the encampments on the morning of the 21st of July."

#### DISTANCE MARCHED BEFORE THE BATTLE.

The distance marched to the field of battle on the morning of the 21st by those who became actively engaged, varied from four to twelve miles; of those in the vicinity of the field but not actively engaged, the distance generally was from two to four

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\* Those regiments which breakfasted at six were of the reserve.

miles, (Richardson's brigade remaining in the position it held on the 20th, menacing the enemy at Blackburn's Ford.)

#### DOUBLE QUICK.

The portion of this march to the battle field which was at double-quick, was, in the case of fifteen of the regiments, from one and one-half to three miles—generally from two and a half to three miles; in the case of thirteen of the regiments there was no portion of the march at double-quick. During the battle a few of the companies, and but a few, moved at double-quick for one or two miles.

It seemed to be generally considered by the volunteers that their strength was unnecessarily and injudiciously wasted by the extent of the double-quick advance. To a certain extent this appears to be true, yet the result could hardly have been affected by it if the men had been in tolerable condition.

#### DEGREE OF VIGOR AT COMMENCEMENT OF BATTLE.

As to the physical condition of the troops on reaching the field of battle, it is reported that eight of the regiments visited were in "fair," "excellent," "good," "best" condition;

That in eight others "the men were somewhat exhausted," "partially exhausted," "evidently suffering;"

That in twelve of the regiments visited, the troops were said to be "much exhausted," "generally fatigued," "many considerably exhausted;" in six of the regiments from one to twenty were "giving out," "giving completely out," &c., one or two instances of "sun stroke" being specified.

In eight regiments none "gave out" before the battle; in from nine to eleven regiments some gave out before the battle; and concerning the remaining regiments there is no report.

(There was an evident disposition to regard the exhausted physical condition of the men as a chief cause of the defeat.)

#### CAUSES OF EXHAUSTION BEFORE THE BATTLE.

As to the causes assigned for the exhaustion, it appears that of the regiments visited it was stated that three had not suffered at all from fatigue or heat, or want of food or drink, or sleep; in seventeen of the regiments "fatigue" was assigned as a cause of exhaustion; in eleven the march at "double-quick" was specified as peculiarly fatiguing; in eight of the seventeen the exhaustion is attributed more to the double-quick than to want of food and drink; in sixteen of the regiments want of food was

assigned as a cause of exhaustion; in eleven want of drink was assigned as a cause; and in a few cases, the exhaustion was attributed, in part at least, to want of sleep, and to a bivouac of three or four nights in the open air, with insufficient clothing, as was the case with the Fire Zouaves, who left their blankets and rubber cloths in camp.

So much as to the condition and movement of the troops before the battle.

#### TIME IN THE BATTLE.

The time during which the troops taking part in the battle of the 21st were actively engaged (pushing toward the enemy, or being temporarily on retreat, after first coming under fire,) appears to have varied from twenty-five minutes to six hours, being in most cases from five to six hours.

To the regiments most actively engaged the time was thought to be much shorter than actually elapsed, the five or six hours in which they were engaged seeming to the men, as they state, scarcely one hour. The time during which men stood under fire without being actively engaged themselves is, on the other hand, found to be over-estimated by them.

#### DEGREE OF VIGOR DURING THE BATTLE.

It is claimed that in eight of the twenty-nine regiments visited, there were no symptoms of exhaustion manifest during the battle; that in eight there was evident suffering and fatigue evinced by men lagging behind, and by companies breaking up, especially after double-quick, few or none giving completely out; that in ten regiments, many (in some instances stated as high as one-fourth or one-third of the number constituting the regiment,) gave completely out, "some few dropping down in convulsions," or suffering from "sun stroke." The evidences of exhaustion in other regiments are not assigned.

#### CAUSES OF EXHAUSTION DURING THE BATTLE.

In explanation of the alleged excessive exhaustion of the men toward the close of the battle, the officers consulted in twenty-six of the twenty-nine regiments referred to, attribute it to fatigue and heat, twenty-one to lack of food and drink. All the reports which assigned insufficiency of food and drink as a cause, also assigned excessive fatigue. Six of them assign fatigue, and especially the march at double quick, as the main cause of the exhaustion which was manifest during and just after the battle.

## CAUSE OF RETREAT.

The proximate cause of the retreat is variously assigned—to the attack of fresh reserves of the enemy upon our right—to the rapid and apparently wild return of the caissons for ammunition—to the appearance of a retreat of our cavalry, who were thought by some to be riding over our own infantry, the rear guard, at the same time, mistaking them for secession cavalry, &c. Certain more organic causes of the defeat are frequently stated.

By some the defeat is attributed to the condition of the men, exhausted by excessive fatigue, and by want of sufficient food, drink, and sleep; by others to "a feeling," on the approach of the fresh reserves of the enemy, "of the total inadequacy of a small force to compete with superior numbers supported by masked batteries." By others the defeat is attributed to "causes involving the whole command;" "to the inefficiency of the general commanding;" "not due to previous exposure and fatigue, but to the bad conduct of the battle on the part of the leaders." By others (regulars) the defeat is attributed to "inefficiency of volunteers;" by one (German) to "bad strategy and want of discipline."

Through all the regiments there appears to have prevailed the false idea of the vast superiority in point of numbers possessed by the enemy, together with a lack of confidence in the military skill of the leaders of the army of the Union as compared with that of the leaders on the part of the rebels; also combined to a certain extent with a dread of meeting an invisible foe.

## OFFICERS LEAVING THEIR COMMANDS.

In thirteen of the regiments the officers are said not to have been much separated from their commands, except in the case of wounded officers; in eleven regiments it appears that the officers were, to a considerable extent, separated from their commands, the regiments being "much scattered," "badly disorganized," "broken into fragments," the men being, in certain cases, "left entirely to themselves." Concerning five of the regiments visited, no information was given on this point. (The above report is that of the officers themselves in most cases.)

## THROWING AWAY OF ARMS AND EQUIPMENTS.

Of the twenty-nine bodies visited, twenty-two threw away or laid aside blankets and haversacks before engaging in battle. Some placed them in a pile under guard, others threw them aside

carelessly, either before arriving on the field, while approaching it at double quick, or immediately before engaging with the enemy. Three regiments threw off their blankets during the battle and the march at double quick on the battle-field; one regiment threw aside blankets only, retaining haversacks; and three only of the twenty-nine bodies of troops visited retained possession of their blankets and haversacks during the engagement.

During the retreat, it appears from the reports of the inspectors that the men of ten regiments did not throw away any of their arms or accoutrements: that the men of nine regiments did throw away portions, no report being made relative to the course of the remaining ten regiments. There is no reason to believe that these latter averaged better in discipline than the former, and it is probable that there was some loss of arms in, at least, half of them. Colonel Keyes, of 1st brigade, 1st division, reports that his brigade bivouaced on the night of the 23d near Fort Corcoran, "every man with his firelock."

The number of muskets thrown away during the retreat was stated, in some cases, to be about fifty; generally the number is not mentioned. [A considerable portion of one regiment are reported to have exchanged their smooth-bore muskets for those of a superior kind left behind by regiments preceding.]

The blankets and haversacks of many of the regiments, especially of those actively engaged in the conflict of the 21st, were lost, being left on the field of battle wherever they were deposited before the engagement. A small number of the regiments, and a few individuals and companies in each regiment, possessed themselves again of their blankets and haversacks, it is stated, before leaving the field.

Overcoats do not appear to have been so generally lost, as many of the regiments left their camps at the time of the general advance, (July 16,) equipped in "light marching order," that is, with blankets, haversacks, and canteens, leaving overcoats in their camps. Certain of the regiments, as for instance the Connecticut regiments and the 2d Maine regiment in the brigade under the efficient command of Col. Keyes, recovered much property of other regiments, including arms and other equipments thrown aside in flight, and also including the abandoned tents and camp equipage of two regiments, (of another brigade,) this latter property being secured by his troops during the continued drenching rain of the 22d. Companies in certain other regiments (as in the Massachusetts 1st) halted on retreat, and picked up blankets, camp kettles, &c., which they found thrown aside on the road. (The loss of blankets at this time led in certain regiments to a good deal of subsequent sickness and increased demoralization.)

## BAD ARMS.

One regiment complained of the bad condition of their smooth bore muskets (the altered muskets of 1840,) nipples breaking, cartridges too small, so as to drop in, or too large, so as to require to be forced in by pressing the ramrod against trees, &c., &c. This complaint does not seem to have been general, with certain regiments the smooth bores working efficiently.

## DISTANCE TRAVELED.

The distance traveled by the several regiments on the night of the retreat varied from twenty to thirty-five miles, generally it was about twenty-seven. The average distance of the day's advance and retreat, including movements on the field, was about forty-four miles.

## PHYSICAL CONDITION AFTER THE RETREAT.

The next morning, (the 22d,) according to the almost universal report, there were few, if any, able men in the infantry. Blistered feet, rheumatic pains, aching limbs, diarrhœa, and nervous debility being prevalent.

The physical condition of three of twenty-nine bodies of troops when visited a few days later, was reported "unaltered by exposure and retreat," "not exhausted;" the men of four regiments were reported to be not much exhausted; those of fifteen were reported to be much exhausted, "physically prostrated," "prostrated," "exhausted and worn out," "greatly affected by exposure and retreat," "terribly fatigued, could not get rested," &c. The physical condition of seven of the regiments was not stated.

## CAUSES OF EXHAUSTION.

The physical exhaustion of the troops was attributed to excessive fatigue, to heat, and to want of food and drink.

## EXTENT AND DEGREE OF DEMORALIZATION AFTER THE BATTLE.

At the time of making the inquiries, from the 25th to the 31st of July, inclusive, it appeared that of the twenty-eight regiments visited, eight were considered by their officers not to be essentially demoralized;\* one was described as "not discouraged;"

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\* Subsequent reports have sometimes been less favorable.

another "full of courage and ready for an engagement;" (1st Mass.) "*morale* good," (2d R. I.) "in good spirits," (2d N. H.)—eight were reported to be not much demoralized, "some few dispirited, but generally cheerful and animated," "somewhat depressed and disgusted with needless (?) exposure, otherwise not much demoralized," (there is reason to think that the exposure to rain, complained of as needless, was far from needless, was in fact essential to the protection of property;) "not much disheartened" "will re-enlist, &c.;" twelve were reported "as much demoralized," "much disheartened and discouraged," "morally prostrated by the rout," "low spirits," "one-half of the regiment demoralized, majority wish to go home," "wish to be disbanded and return to fight under other leaders," "completely demoralized, discontented, unwilling to serve, because, as they allege, ill-fed and unpaid."

The degree of demoralization does not appear to be coincident with the degree of physical and nervous exhaustion.

As a rule, the best officered, the best disciplined, and the best fed regiments, were obviously the least demoralized.

#### CAUSES OF DEMORALIZATION.

The demoralization was attributed, by those making answer to the inquiry, generally, in each case, to several causes combined. Among these, in fifteen cases physical and nervous prostration was mentioned; in seven cases, discouragement on account of the result of the battle, accompanied sometimes with a feeling of inadequacy to compete with superior numbers; in two cases the great mortality attendant upon the late engagements was assigned among the causes; in three cases, dissatisfaction with armament—smooth bore muskets; in three, dissatisfaction with and lack of confidence in officers; in five, dissatisfaction with food; in one case, dissatisfaction on account of failure to receive from Government pay promptly for services; in two dissatisfaction in consequence of supposed needless exposure to storm.

#### GENERAL SUMMARY.

From these investigations, combined with information derived from official reports of the generals commanding; from published statements in rebel as well as loyal journals; from previous investigations of the inspectors of the Sanitary Commission as to the condition of the troops, and from other sources, it is manifest that our army, previous to and at the time of the engagement, was suffering from want of sufficient, regularly-provided, and suitable food, from thirst. from want (in certain cases) of

refreshing sleep, and from the exhausting effects of a long, hot, and rapid march, the more exhausting because of the diminution of vital force of the troops due to the causes above enumerated. They entered the field of battle with no pretence of any but the most elementary and imperfect military organization, and, in respect of discipline, little better than a mob, which does not know its leaders. The majority of the officers had, three months before, known nothing more of their duties than the privates whom they should have been able to lead, instruct, and protect. Nor had they, in many cases, in the meantime, been gaining materially, for they had been generally permitted, and many had been disposed, to spend much time away from their men, in indolence or frivolous amusement, or dissipation.

It appears that many were much exhausted on reaching the field of battle, but that, supported by the excitement of the occasion, they rallied fairly, and gradually drove the opposing forces from Sudley Spring to the lower ford, and from the lower ford to beyond the Stone bridge and the Warrenton road; that, at this time, (half-past three,) when congratulated by superior officers, and congratulating themselves on having achieved a victory, and when having repulsed reinforcements sent from the extreme right of the enemy to support their retreating columns, they were just relaxing their severely-tried energies, there appeared in the distance "the residue" of the forces of General Johnston, (see McDowell's report, Dr. Nott's letter to a Mobile paper, and correspondence of Charleston Mercury,) a single brigade (Elsey's) coming from the Manassas Gap Junction railroad, marching at double-quick to engage our troops at the right who had been hotly fighting unrelieved by reserves during the day. This brigade, joined with the two regiments of Kershaw and Cash, "turned the tide of battle." (See in Richmond Dispatch, July 29, statement "of a distinguished officer who bore a conspicuous part on the field of battle on the 21st of July.")

Our troops, ignorant of the fact that they had been contending against and repulsing the combined forces of Beauregard and Johnston; and believing that this inconsiderable remnant of Johnston's forces which they now saw approaching to be his entire column; and feeling their inability, without rest or refreshment, to engage an additional force of fresh troops nearly equal in number to those with whom they had been contending during the day,—commenced a retreat, not very orderly, but quite as much so, at first, as had been the advance in which they had driven back the forces of the enemy. Their (nominal)

leaders, who too often had followed them in battle, were, in many cases, not behind them on retreat.

As they retired, however, a sense of disintegration began to pervade their ranks; each ceased to rely on his comrade for support, and this tendency was augmented by the upturned wagons blocking the road, which served to completely break the imperfect columns.\*

The reports of the inspectors give no evidence that the panic infected the extreme left, or the reserves, to any sensible degree. It was uncontrollable only with the troops on the extreme right, among whom it originated. Many at the centre and the left were surprised when the order came to retreat, and for a time considered it as merely an order to change position in view of a still further general advance. Some officers state that they "warmly remonstrated"—"too warmly, perhaps"—when they received the order to retire.

The returns of the inspectors are not conclusive on this point; but from the result of subsequent specific inquiries by Mr. Elliott and the Secretary, it can be stated with confidence that indications of terror or great fear were seen in but a comparatively very small part of the retreating force. Most trudged along, blindly following (as men do in any mob) those before them, but with reluctance, and earnest and constant expressions of dissatisfaction and indignation, while no inconsiderable number retained, through all the length of the privation and discomfort of their dreary return to Washington, astonishing cheerfulness and good humor, and were often heard joking at their own misfortunes, and ridiculing the inefficiency of their officers. The Germans of the reserve were frequently singing. None of the reserves were in the slightest degree affected by the panic, and their general expression with reference to the retreat was one of wonder and curiosity.

The reserve, nevertheless, suffered much from fatigue, and subsequently exhibited most decided demoralization.

\* From a consideration of all the evidence, Mr. Elliott states that he has himself formed the following opinion:

"The *retreat* was immediately due mainly to *delusion*, on the part of the troops of the Union, respecting the force of the enemy, especially of the reserves advancing from the railroad to engage our forces, combined with extreme physical exhaustion; that the *roul* was due, in part at least, to the too near approach of the wagons of the volunteers to the field of battle, thereby dividing their columns on retreat; and that the sense of disintegration, and consequent *panic*, (so far as it existed,) was due to want of discipline, to physical exhaustion, and to want of all provision for securing an orderly retreat, combined."

The Commission met in Washington on the 26th of July, and most of its members suffered the pain of witnessing something of the general condition of the army at that time. As there are no means of recording it with exactness, it is important to the purpose of this report that the impression then received should be in a measure recalled, analyzed, and traced to its foundations.

A victorious enemy was known to be within ten miles of the capital, and was presumed to be cautiously advancing. Never could the occasion for military vigor, energy, promptitude, and thoroughness of action seem to be greater. It was the belief that the utmost and best directed efforts of every one who had to do directly or indirectly with the army should be concentrated at Washington; that, without previous concert, brought the majority of the Commission thither. Arriving, as they did, soon after daybreak, and passing from the railroad station toward the President's House, the aspect of the streets was in the strongest possible contrast to that which would be imagined of a city placed by a stern necessity under the severe control of an effective military discipline. Groups of men wearing parts of military uniforms, and some of them with muskets, were indeed to be seen; but, upon second sight, they did not appear to be soldiers. Rather they were a most wo-begone rabble, which had, perhaps, clothed itself with the garments of dead soldiers left in a hard-fought battle-field. No two were dressed completely alike; some were without caps, others without coats, others without shoes. All were alike excessively dirty, unshaven, unkempt, and dank with dew. The groups were formed around fires made in the streets, and burning boards wrenched from citizens' fences. Some were still asleep, at full length in the gutters and on door-steps, or sitting on the curbstone, resting their heads against the lamp-posts. Others were evidently begging for food at house-doors. Some appeared ferocious, others only sick and dejected; all excessively weak, hungry, and selfish. They were mainly silent, and when they spoke it humiliated a man to hear them. No pack of whining, snarling, ill-fed, vagabond street dogs in an oriental city ever more strongly produced the impression of forlorn, outcast, helpless, hopeless misery. There was no apparent organization; no officers were seen among them, seldom even a non-commissioned officer. At Willards' hotel, however, officers swarmed.

They, too, were dirty and in ill-condition; but appeared indifferent, reckless, and shameless, rather than dejected or morose. They were talking of the battle, laughing at the incidents of the retreat, and there was an evident inclination among them to exaggerate everything that was disgraceful. Since they had not

a victory to boast of, they made the defeat as dramatic and notable as possible. They seemed to be quite unconscious of personal responsibility for the results of the battle. "Where is your regiment?" one was asked. "Completely demoralized, sir; completely demoralized." "Where is it now?" "All disorganized—all disorganized." "But where are the men?" "I'm told that there are two or three hundred of them together somewhere near the Capitol, but I have not seen them yet since the battle." A captain sat with his feet on the window grating, smoking; a man outside said to him, "Captain, there are two hundred of our men just beyond the Long Bridge, and they have not had anything to eat to-day." "Where's the Quartermaster?" "I don't know: there isn't any officer there." "They don't want me, do they?" "They have not had anything to eat to-day, and there's no officer to get it for them." "Well, it's too bad;" and the Captain continued smoking, and ten minutes afterward had not put his feet to the floor. It was not till a Provost Guard of regulars drove these officers out of the town, almost at the point of the bayonet, that they seemed capable of entertaining any purpose of duty. As to the men, it was nothing but starvation, in many cases, that brought them back to their's. In how many ways the humiliating confession of cowardice was heard; how pitcously the desire was expressed to go home; how distrustful the officers were of the men; how universally those who did not acknowledge cowardice and home-sickness were disinclined to resume duty, or to continue under the same officers as before, cannot be statistically told. It was enough to establish the conviction that the army was, for the time being, quite broken up and useless. For a time it seemed as if there was no government, civil or military, at the seat of government. The newspapers re-echoed the words of the Secretary of War, "the Capital is safe;" because, as every one understood, the Capital could be defended with no spirit, confidence, or resolution, even by the large body of soldiers in it who had not directly participated in the battle. To re-establish in them some degree of confidence was the first necessity. With this the Capital would be safe. But this was wanting. All power of exercising confidence, all respect, every social sentiment seemed to have been for the time lost to them. This but feebly indicates the nature of that condition of the government forces which was generally denominated their "demoralization," and which was considered the direct result of the battle of Bull Run.

It did not seem sufficiently accounted for by the simple facts of the battle as generally related; that is to say, by an advance

against the enemy, which was everywhere successful, until a check to the right wing caused with some a panic, and led to a general discontinuance of the aggressive movement, both armies resuming the position held previously, the enemy having suffered much the most, as was then generally believed, and, so far as yet appears, truly.

Considering that it was desirable that its real causes should be more clearly ascertained and defined, the investigation was set on foot, the results of which, to the present time, have now been laid before the Commission. Regarded as an attempt to find in the minor circumstances attending the battle adequate causes for the condition of the army which succeeded it, the investigation has not succeeded. Should it warrant the conviction, however, that no sufficient cause of the demoralization was to be found in the circumstances immediately attending the battle, it may be that a further investigation would be induced, which would yield results even more important than were originally anticipated.

The Secretary has executed the duty which he had proposed to himself, in the analysis of the facts of the battle directly bearing on the question. The duty of a complete exploration of the causes of the demoralization of the army in July he trusts will be assumed by a committee of the Commission.

That there is a broad field for such an exploration yet remaining to be entered, and that it will involve the consideration of many questions, a satisfactory decision of which will have a direct and important bearing upon the welfare of the country, the Secretary is prepared to give his reasons for believing. In doing so, he will not attempt to reserve an expression of his own judgment upon the questions which naturally arise, because it will be found that some of these involve questions of his official duty, and in regard to which it is proper that the Commission should be informed how he is impelled to act; for which reason also he desires, as a constituent member of the Commission, to be allowed to present views to which he has no assurance that the Commission is prepared to assent.

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Where the phenomena are the most distinct, the causes should be the most obvious.

The most distinct and notable example of demoralization after the battle of Bull Run is found in the regiment known as the New York Fire Zouaves. It so happens that the circumstances of the battle, to which the general demoralization is commonly

ascribed, could have had very little effect on this regiment. It was dispersed as a regiment long before the reserves of the enemy, which led to the general retreat, and which immediately induced the panic, were brought into action.

Whatever the circumstances were which more immediately preceded its disorganization, the officers and members of it were not found disposed to lay much stress upon them, but rather to refer their demoralization to the bad terms on which the men had previously been with some of their officers, to their having been obliged to sleep for several nights without the protection of tents or blankets, to excessive fatigue and exhaustion before they came under fire, and to the fact that they had never been paid. It is observed that more of this regiment than of others fell out, apparently from physical exhaustion, but certainly exhausted in courage, before the battle opened.

This explanation is less unsatisfactory than most which were offered by the various officers of other regiments examined by the inspectors. Yet to one who knows the habits of the class from which this regiment was recruited; how frequently they voluntarily pass night after night without sleep, and under circumstances most unfavorable to health; to one who has seen them at daylight of a winter's morning pressing forward, and with no possible mercenary motive, struggling for the privilege of dragging a soaked hose up a ladder to the roof of a tall warehouse in a biting northerly wind, and this after they have been standing all the night in freezing water, and when their clothing is covered as with a mail of ice,—this explanation of the condition in which they were found a week after the battle of Bull Run, can hardly be sufficient. The sudden tap of a drum caused numbers of them to start and turn pale. They were confessed cowards; and whatever else they were, when they left New York, cowards they were not. No one in Washington called them cowards during the fire at Willards' hotel.

Statements which have been made publicly, attribute the numerous desertions and subsequent mutinous condition of this regiment mainly to certain alleged special causes of complaint against its officers. But why should a disgraceful imputation, which in a large measure others share with this regiment, be ascribed to causes special to it? There were the men of Varian's battery, for instance, whose conduct was even more cowardly, but who, after sneaking off, on a paltry excuse, before the battle, instead of complaining of their officers, had the assurance to come before the public with a testimonial of their satisfaction with them. Weeks after the battle, the New York 79th—a regiment which has since had an opportunity to show itself

really brave—was in actual mutiny, under circumstances which led General McClellan to apply the term “dastardly” to their conduct. The same was, in fact, the case, at that time, with many other regiments, the mutinous disposition in these being only more readily and completely concealed.

Thus, though there was some difference of symptoms, the essential disease of the Fire Zouaves seems not to have been peculiar to them, but general. Is it not probable that its causes were also general? And if the disease of the Fire Zouaves existed before the battle, must we not look for the causes of the general disease also in circumstances which existed before the battle?

As the reverse extreme, the Second Rhode Island may be taken. This was one of the regiments mentioned by the Secretary in his report of July 9th, as under exceptional sanitary conditions. It was so in the following respects: it was better lodged than others; it was better clothed than others; it was better fed. The men had fruit, soft bread, butter, and a variety of condiments, regularly and constantly, which was the case with scarcely any other than the Rhode Island troops. They frequently had roast meats, baked meats, puddings, and pies. They had an excellent band of music, which played frequently for the pleasure of the regiment, and not merely as a military ceremony, as was the case with most of the regimental bands. They had dancing and social and athletic recreations; they had an industrious chaplain, and regular daily religious services conducted with good taste, the strictest decorum, and real solemnity. They were famous for their singing. They had singing societies, and various other social organizations. They received more visitors, including members of the Cabinet and others of distinction, and especially they were more visited by ladies than others.\*

Their march to the battle-field was as fatiguing as that of others; they were as badly off for food as others, having nothing but a few crackers to eat for more than thirty-six hours. They were the first to engage; were severely engaged, and as long as,

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\* Baron Larrey says: “To prevent this sort of cerebral affection [nostalgia] in soldiers who have lately joined their corps, it is necessary to recruit their strength exhausted during the day, to vary their occupations, and to turn their labors and recreations to their own advantage as well as to that of society. Thus, after the accustomed military exercises, it is desirable that they should be subjected to regular hours, gymnastic amusements, and some mode of useful instruction. It is in this manner especially that mutual instruction, established among the troops of the line, is beneficial to the soldier and the State. Warlike music during their repasts, or at their hours of recreation, will contribute much to elevate the spirits of the soldier, and to keep away those gloomy reflections which frequently produce the effects which have been traced above.”

or longer than, any others; they were badly cut up, losing their colonel and other officers, and sixteen per cent. of the ranks in killed. They stood firm under fire while the panic-stricken crowd swept by and through them, and until they received the order to retreat. They then wheeled steadily into column, and marched in good order, until the road was obstructed by overturned wagons. Here they were badly broken up by a cannonade, scattered and disorganized, but afterwards, having mainly collected at Centreville, reformed and marched the same night, under such of their officers as remained alive, to and through Washington to a position several miles to the northward—a post of danger—where they at once resumed regular camp duties. When visited by the inspector, a few days afterwards, he was told and was led to believe that the men had only wanted a day's rest to be ready and willing to advance again upon the enemy. He reported the regiment not demoralized.\*

How is this to be accounted for on the supposition that the general demoralization of the volunteers was caused by the failure of the battle? Is it not more rational to believe that pre-existent circumstances had produced a latent general demoralization, and that the Fire Zouaves had suffered under an excess of these, while the Rhode Island Second had been so fortunate as to entirely escape their action?

Let us, then, glance for a moment at the pre-existent circumstances of the volunteers.

They had hurried to Washington, in April, to offer their services to government to defend the country against secessionists and traitors. They had done this with a generous and manful neglect to inquire on what terms the service was to be rendered, and with little regard to their own comfort or pecuniary interest. All such considerations, if they occurred to them, were, at least, made secondary to the consideration of the first importance, the secure defence of the country against secessionists and traitors.

Under a military organization, the country is represented by the government. To the volunteer at the seat of government, the country and government were soon interchangeable terms. It was no confusion of ideas by which the volunteer came to regard himself as serving the government; nor is it entirely a confusion of ideas which regards government as a personality. It is an organization of persons. It is not to be expected of the

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\* This regiment is now in admirable condition, physically and morally. Its sick list is less than one to a hundred. On one occasion, on an order to advance against the enemy, every man presented himself as fit to undertake a forced march.

volunteer that he should comprehend this organization, nor that he should distinguish between that for which the laws are accountable and that for which those who administer the laws have to answer. He presumes the government to be much obliged to him for the aid which he is so ready to give in its emergency, and he understands that government is only too glad to assume certain duties in return toward him. To provide for him suitable food and lodging, and to take care of him when sick or wounded, are perhaps the best defined of these.

That so much was undertaken by government, and that he was to immediately risk his life in the defence of government against the secessionists and traitors, was about as far as the volunteer, on an average, had thought, as in April he walked out of the railroad station, with thousands of others, to stand in the dreary streets of Washington, patient for hours in the strength of his great new nobleness of purpose, waiting for the country to find something for him to eat, and to get some place ready where he could be allowed to rest. Sometimes he waited, standing in the rain, all night for this; but at that time, though he may have sickened bodily under it, he did not get soul sick.

But two and three months after this it was an every-day occurrence for the agents of the Commission to find the volunteer in a camp hospital very sick; his only sustenance fresh bread and salt pork; his only drink, green coffee. He lies on the damp ground, with no covering but a blanket, which cannot properly be called a blanket. He wants kind and constant attention, and delicate food, such as from childhood, in his northern home, he has been accustomed to when sick. But the regimental surgeon, who may or may not be properly called a surgeon, is too much absorbed in learning the intricate history of official requisitions, and in waiting for a personal interview with the government man on the other side of the town, who can supply an ambulance, to see him often. His comrades, who might be supposed to be ready to tend him to the best of their imperfect ability, have got tired of doing chambermaid's work for the doctor, and at last have refused to do it any longer, because it is not what they volunteered for, and they think it's time government made other arrangements; and then it may very likely be that he has just heard that his wife was, a week ago, on the point of being turned out of doors, because she could not pay her rent—that he had promised to send her his pay, but has failed to do so, and is yet unable to do so, because, after nearly three months' service, he has not seen the first dollar of his pay. Many cases like this came to the knowledge of the Secretary. They were extreme cases, it is true; and if it was the object of this report to

arraign the government, it might not be just to cite them. But the purpose now in view is to ascertain what influences were acting on the character of the volunteers, and it cannot be said that extreme cases do not affect character. It may be that the ignorance of the surgeon was the only cause of the apparent neglect of the sick volunteer; but that does not diminish the neglect, nor the effect which that neglect will exercise upon his feelings, and which will be radiated from him, when he recovers, upon others. It may be that it is entirely owing to the neglect of his colonel to render his muster-roll that he is not paid; but he will hardly know this, and, if he does know it, it will but little diminish his disappointment and sense of neglect. The Secretary recollects that one colonel told him in June that, if his regiment did not soon get their pay, it would be impossible to prevent many desertions—difficult to prevent mutiny; and he distinctly remembers hearing a company of sick men curse a government which provided so inefficiently for its sick servants. The government responsibility in the matter may have been no greater than it is for an overturned government mail-coach; but the irresponsibility of the government does not lessen the pain of the man who has his leg under the wheel, nor help in the least to cheer up the sick volunteer lying neglected on the ground, disgusted with salt pork and acrimonious coffee, and heart-aching with appeals from home, to which he thinks he is unjustly prevented from responding. Let the skill of the surgeon at length set him on his feet again, and he becomes a centre of influence for his comrades. What is that influence likely to be?

But if this was an unusual condition, what was the usual condition of the volunteer early in July, and what effect was this condition producing?

His air, diet, drink—his habits in all respects—had been for some time quite different from what they ever were before. His original excitement had all been exhausted. He came fully expecting an immediate battle with the traitors. There had been some assassination of pickets, but nothing more. He had no experience of anything so simply tiresome as this war. It was from no want of traitors that it dragged so slowly. In every bar-room where volunteers were daily drugged in Washington there were traitors. He was told that they were yet in every ship and fort and public office—that the clerks of the departments and of the congressional committees, and the President's servants themselves, were traitors. Female traitors looked disdainfully down from windows and out of carriages upon the ragged and hungry and dirty volunteer. Secessionists were common enough; but any fighting of secessionists was very

uncommon. Sumter had been yielded to them, and Harper's Ferry, and the forts at Savannah, at Mobile, and the Balize. They had taken the navy yard at Norfolk, and that at Pensacola; the pirates had been let out, and scores of resigned officers let in, and the army in Texas parolled; and, while the blockade was made game of, the secessionists were actually allowed to establish batteries between the navy yard at Washington and the sea. And yet he saw no sign of fighting them. Would it be strange if the volunteer began at length to feel that when he "rushed to arms" he had been imposed upon? That he began to suspect that the talk of war was all for "buncomb?" War? War without artillery and without cavalry? Without shoes? With these antique smooth-bores? With that crazy bridge over the Potomac, and that slab-sided old wood scow, to keep up a communication with Fort Corcoran? And when he has never yet seen a general officer, and when nothing is ever found for him to do, but in guard duty over his own camp and the eternal manual of arms? If he had been a less intelligent soldier, he would have known and cared less about these things. As it was, he talked of little else, except his personal grievances.

Did the government really care at all for the "brave volunteer?" If so, why did he sometimes have food that he could not eat, and sometimes none at all, for days together? Why should he be left to sleep in rotten straw and shoddy blankets, and sometimes for months with nothing at all, on the bare ground? Why should he be required to stand for an hour at noon, exposed to the sun of the hottest day of the year, in Pennsylvania avenue, while his colonel takes a drink with his friends at Willards', and there is the shade of brick walls, forty feet in his rear? Why should his captain be allowed to insult him with impunity, when, if he speaks a word for himself, he may be sent to the guard-house, and put to work in filth?

Did it answer this satisfactorily to say to him that his officers were of his own selection?—that his captain was a blackguard and a petty tyrant, his colonel a politician, his surgeon a quack, and his quartermaster a knave? He did not know them for this when he chose them. Now he does, he would choose to be rid of them. Why should not the government remove them and appoint better men? Is the difficulty in the laws? But here are the law-makers in session: why not make better laws?

All who were intimately associated with the volunteers about Washington in the early part of July will bear witness that their conversation was mainly of the tenor above indicated. It is not at all improbable that there were agents of the secessionists among them to encourage such conversation.

If the volunteer could have found precisely where and with whom rested the responsibility of that which offended him; if he could have been made sure that the present administration had nothing to do with it, and was doing its best to remedy it, it is doubtful if it would have averted the effect of the continued disappointment and humiliation of his patriotism. It is certain that this effect was none the less because, to the volunteer, the difficulties of the case were "all a muddle."

There was, at the same time, a growing want of confidence between the men and the more immediate representatives and agents of the Government—the officers—because the men were naturally disposed to hold their officers, in the first place, responsible for the causes of their discontent. To a certain extent, but not altogether, justly so. They, however, could not distinguish between that for which the officers were justly to blame, and that which lay behind them. The consciousness of this had its effect on the officers. The company officers, especially, were acquiring habits of treating their men, some with familiarity, others with an apologetic manner, others with an insolent affectation of sternness, each according to his character, responding to the ill-will of the men in their duty to him.

Thus, while the larger and nobler purposes of the army had no opportunity of action, but were rather constantly being frustrated, of the smaller, the everyday wants, the appetites, there was also nothing but disappointment. Drill and the dress parade was no longer an amusement. The only obvious general resort for recreation was the dram shop, and this only made the volunteer feel the more angrily the want of his pay. The Commission will remember that some officers presented it as a reason why it might not be best to urge measures to secure the more prompt payment of the men; that no recreation was open to them, except such as would demoralize them, and they were as well without it.

The better men were tired of this sort of soldier's life; were disgusted with it, and yet were ashamed to acknowledge this, and strove to resist and suppress a natural and truthful manifestation of it.

But there really had been pervading all classes in most regiments a sense of disappointment, of annoyance, humiliation, and vexation. Consider that co-existent with this there was the effect of an entire change of air and of habits, of food and drink; irregular sleep, and exposure to excessive heat, alternating with exposure to cool, damp, and malarious night-air, or the mephitic atmosphere of crowded and unventilated tents.\*

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\* In June the director of one of the general hospitals called attention to the

The volunteer was in a transitional state physically. He was distinctly undergoing the process of acclimation. Was he not, only as much less distinctly as all diseases of "the moral faculties" being complicated with those of the body are more beyond human comprehension than those of the body simply, undergoing a demoralizing process? Was he losing confidence only, or was he losing something of the "faculty" of confidence—the power of exercising confidence?

A sick man is expected to be peevish, timid, weak, and wilful. Insist that he shall not be, demand of him the usual exercise of his mental and moral faculties, and you aggravate his disease. To the soul-sick volunteer came, at length, a demand to advance towards the enemy. With some the disease was even then so deeply seated that they threw away the rations provided for the advance, so little were they able to believe of the actual fact of war—so little confidence could they exercise in the judgment of those placed over them. But actual war it was, not demanding merely the usual exercise of the virtues of courage and faith and perseverance of the volunteer, but putting these to the severe trial—for severe it always is with every man—of his first battle. The strong excitement overrides the moral sickness as it does fatigue, and hunger, and thirst, during the stormy advance; but then comes the check, the repulse, the retreat; obstacles breaking column; final dispersion and military disintegration. And here must come the relapse; with some, as, quite generally, with the Fire Zouaves, it will have come earlier; but with all there at length comes a relapse, and with the relapse a frightful aggravation of the malady.

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fact that a remarkable proportion of his patients were from Maine, and that they seemed to be suffering under no distinct disease, but from general debility and depression of spirits. He attributed this to the fact of their having experienced a greater change of air than any of the others. The regiments in which demoralization has since been most obvious are from Maine, Minnesota, and that class of the population of New York who would be selected as peculiarly subject to the sweep of an epidemic. Nostalgia seems more evident in one of the Maine regiments than elsewhere. A private of this regiment, a few days since, placed a check for \$150 in the hands of his surgeon, as an inducement to him to obtain his discharge.

Baron Larrey says:

"The inhabitants of moist and cold climates, as Holland, or mountainous regions, as Switzerland and Brisgau, are very susceptible of the moral impressions which produce nostalgia; a remark which has been already made by many celebrated physicians. The troops of these nations, in consequence of susceptibility, suffered most from the cruel vicissitudes to which we were exposed during the campaign of Moscow."

Since this note was written, above 100 men of the Maine regiment referred to have thrown down their arms, and demanded to be sent home. They are under arrest. The Minnesotans, who are the finest men, physically, in the army, seem to have recovered, and are now "ready for anything."

Thus, by accepting, as a condition in the case, the essential deep-seated demoralization of the volunteers before the battle, the degree of their demoralization after the battle becomes less extraordinary, because more analagous to a common experience.

If this view be not adopted, then we seem left to accept it as a fact that thousands of men, as enthusiastic, and, the Secretary believes, as brave by nature, as any that can ever be drawn from among a civilised people, became, practically, good for nothing for any warlike purpose, under a trial of battle and of campaigning such as would have had scarcely the least depressing effect upon soldiers proper; which, in fact, did have no perceptible depressing effect upon the regular soldiers taking part in it,\* and which really was but little more severe than the dangers and fatigues, and privations and hardships that, as seamen and whalers and fishermen, and lumbermen and miners and quarriers, thousands of these very men had been accustomed to undergo without discomposure or complaint; which was not at all more terrible than the dangers and privations and hardships that men of delicate nurture frequently encounter in following a mere purpose of recreation, and which, beyond a day, has no other effect upon them than to cheer and invigorate their spirits.

If not in the nature of a disease, that is to say, if not assignable to special local causes, which can be traced out, defined, and in future guarded against, but a condition natural, normal, and always to be reckoned upon in dealing with volunteers, is it not the duty of the Commission to apprise the nation upon what a game of chance its liberty is staked?

The Commission had abundant personal observation of the volunteers a fortnight after the battle of Bull Run, and will judge whether regiment upon regiment of them, whose losses had been in less proportion to their numbers than the average losses of the Massachusetts fishing craft in every heavy easterly gale, would have been of the smallest value in the practice of the science of war as an exact science.

There is every reason to believe that a parallel state of things existed, it is true, in the rebel army. That man for man, the force of the nation is now stronger, less liable to panic, and less liable to demoralization, under similar circumstances, than that of its enemy's;† but this fact affords but insufficient assurance of safety. If properly presented to them, the people will not allow that the subjugation of this land to the purposes of the dealers in

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\* See, in Appendix, a comparison of regulars and volunteers in and after the battle.

† See a comparison in the Appendix.

a certain kind of property and its products shall be hazarded on a game of cards, even if their generals hold the better hand.

Must the nation, which depends mainly on volunteers for a defence of its liberties and independence, be at the mercy of any powerful enemy? Certainly no man of military experience would have considered it impracticable to have compelled an early surrender of the capital, with all the heads of the nation, and its central legislative bodies, together with the whole volunteer army, with all its equipments and stores, to form which the energies and patriotism of the loyal States had been for three months devoted, if he could have occupied the position of the enemy at that time with but a score of regiments of the disciplined soldiers of any European army. It is mortifying to acknowledge it, but the Commission will hardly find reason to refuse to do so. And unless it can be seen that there were circumstances preceding this affair of Bull Run, peculiarly calculated to undermine the strength of a volunteer army, which circumstances may, in future, be surely guarded against, the Commission cannot too soon or too earnestly protest against the further waste of the national resources in the attempt to maintain a system so inherently weak and worthless. That it is and must be weak and worthless, is well known to be the judgment of nearly all the officers of the regular army who had experience of the volunteers in the Mexican war. Whatever the result of the present war, it can hardly reverse the judgment of the regular officers, inasmuch as the final success of the volunteers, however complete it is, must be a success only against volunteers, not against a regular army. Yet it is extremely doubtful if the American people will submit, however strongly advised to do so, to the maintenance of a standing army as large as the regular officers would deem to be adequate for the protection of the country in all contingencies. The volunteer system is, in truth, a part of our system of government, and when we wholly give it up, we surrender with it something of our distinctive national life. It is obvious that every hour this war continues, intensifies our national life, and increases the devotion of the people to whatever is essentially distinctive in it. The volunteer system is not, then, likely to be wholly given up in any ease; but it may be, and it must be, placed upon a firmer and more trustworthy foundation than it has hitherto had.

If, therefore, the volunteer army at Washington, in June last, was undergoing a process of gradual but sure demoralization, it is of the first importance that this should be distinctly established and made known, and the causes defined as fully as possible, in order that they may be forever hereafter avoided. The Commission at that time formally called attention to certain

dangers which it recognized, and suggested remedies for them. Informally, in interviews of the members of the Commission with the leading persons of the military administration, many such suggestions were made. A few can readily be recalled, together with the substance of the answers which were received.

1st. A general order requiring a stricter physical examination of recruits? Answer. The volunteers would not submit to it.

2d. A general order placing a limit on the number of absences to be allowed from the camp of each regiment? Answer. The colonels ought to know enough not grant leave injudiciously.

3d. A general order limiting the hours during which officers and men should be allowed leave of absence from their camps? Answer. It could not be enforced.

4th. An order to prevent men from purchasing intoxicating liquor, and from bringing it into the camps? Answer. It could not be enforced.

5th. A general order calling attention to various infractions of the army regulations and of the articles of war, which were then constantly witnessed, and which passed without rebuke? Answer. Nothing better is to be expected of volunteers.

6th. The issue of detailed instructions to captains, with regard to certain duties which were almost universally neglected by them? Answer. It is the duty of their colonels to instruct them.

7th. The issue of instructions to colonels as to certain duties almost universally neglected by them? Answer. If they don't know the duties of their office, they have no business in it.

8th. The modification of certain rules to meet the special difficulties of officers ignorant of their duties? Answer. These rules work well in the regular army.

In fine, while the volunteer officers were nearly all ignorant and inexperienced in military affairs, and were known and acknowledged to be so, scarcely the slightest variation, abatement, addition, or explanation was thought practicable to be made, in their favor, to the laws, regulations, rules, and customs applicable to the carefully prepared, thoroughly trained, and well-tried officers of the regular army. But one important exception is recollected. Absolute physical starvation of the volunteers could not be permitted; and as this would have inevitably resulted to thousands from the ignorance of the captains of their duty, if the officers of the Subsistence Department had refused to go beyond the requirements of the regulations, this part of the duty of the captains was anticipated and in a measure executed for them. Unquestionably, it was still executed imperfectly, and not nearly as well or as economically as it would have

been had it been left to captains who had enjoyed the benefit of a West Point education, or who, by any other means, had been able and willing to perform the full service required of captains, under the regulations. For all that, it was much better than if it had been entirely neglected. But various other services little less important to the vigor and spirit of the army were also entirely neglected by the captains, and were not in the least provided for by higher authority. The result has been less tangible and obvious, perhaps, than would have been the result of neglect to distribute food to the men, but it has scarcely been less calamitous to the nation.

These remarks are not made with a fault-finding purpose toward the regular officers as a body. They generally performed all their duty, and more than all the duty required of them by the laws, under the circumstances. It was their duty to be governed by the army regulations, and the army regulations did not require of them to become the schoolmasters of the volunteer officers, nor to interfere to obviate the natural results of their ignorance and neglect. They believed (and, perhaps, they were right) that it was necessary that the volunteers should be made to understand their duty through an experience of the inconvenience which a neglect of it would occasion. At all events, with the opinion they had always had and been ready to express of the fatuity of the nation in depending so entirely upon volunteers, and in maintaining so small a regular force, it was hardly in common human nature to make the best they could under the circumstances of that which they deemed incorrigibly wrong and weak from its very starting point, viz: the organization of companies by an election of officers.

The sagacity and courage of two very uncommon men, General McClellan and General Meigs, cutting through, over-riding, and superseding the old traditions and customs of the army wherever the interests of the nation made it necessary, yet using ten times the rigor of enforcement in regard to the regulations that had been previously used with volunteers, has, since July, made the best of an ineffective system, and shown what might have been done with volunteers before July. Even the demoralized regiments, with but very few exceptions, are now in better condition, in better spirit, in better health, than they were when they received the order for the advance to Bull Run. The very measures which the Commission urged, which it was said could not be enforced, would not be submitted to, and would be useless with volunteers, are now rigidly enforced, are submitted to with manifest satisfaction by volunteers, and are obviously pro-

ducing the most beneficent effects, and this equally in the new and the older regiments. It is found not impracticable to attempt discipline with volunteers. On the contrary, the most thorough enforcement of discipline leads to the best results. The most exact disciplinarians are the favorites of the volunteers; the best disciplined regiments are the most contented regiments.

All that it was possible, under the laws, for good generalship to do in the time which has elapsed since General McClellan assumed command of the army of the Potomac, has been done to make the best of the national military system; but the great improvement that has been effected must not lead us to shut our eyes to that which is still reprehensible, or prevent us from asking how far this is due to inefficiency of administration, and how far to inherent vices of the system.

To revert again to the hypothesis of disease, there is still room for the inquiry, Has it been entirely eradicated? The Secretary suspects that certain regiments are hardly yet convalescent. In one of those which suffered most, and most unaccountably, on the theory that the demoralization was the result of the battle, a medical inspector of the Commission reported this week that fully one-half the extraordinary number of men reported as sick, were sick, in his judgment, in no otherwise than homesick. Even the nominally well men, though in the presence of the enemy, it was confessed, had no stomach for fighting;—in this respect being in remarkable contrast to others camped adjoining them, who were impatiently anticipating an immediate order to engage.

If the disease is thus deep-seated, we can hardly imagine that its causes have been destroyed at a blow. Let us look the facts fairly in the face without fear or flattery.

The volunteers are now abundantly, yet far from wholesomely fed; they are lodged as well as the laws provide that soldiers shall be lodged, yet no sensible farmer lodges his beasts nearly as unwholesomely—the government lodges its own horses in some respects better. They are beginning to be well clothed; but some regiments are yet objects of charity in this particular. With typhus increasing, no means are available—at least none at all adequate—to keep them clean; and many of the camps are yet really in a filthy condition. It would be a poor farmer who would offer the same invitation to vermin and cutaneous diseases to enter his stables that are offered in some of our volunteer regiments. The sick frequently suffer for want of proper medicine, food, attendance, shelter, and professional advice.

Congress did, in its extra session, in some sort recognize the

fact that volunteers were not as regulars.\* The volunteers were badly fed, and therefore Congress increased the ration. But was not the ration abundant in quantity before? Did not this Commission most satisfactorily ascertain in June, that there was food enough provided by the law, and the only difficulty was that the volunteer could not get it, and that when he got it he could not cook it?†

These, the real defects of the army system in its application to volunteers, Congress did nothing to remedy. The agents of this Commission verbally and by printed documents have labored to make commanders of companies acquainted with their functions (as established for the regular army) in respect to the subsistence of the men; and in some measure by these means, and probably much more by the gradual teaching of necessity, in experience, a considerable and quite general improvement is believed to have occurred both in the distribution and in the cooking of food. It has been, however, by adapting the knife to the case, not the case to the knife.

Some improvement in the method of payment, by which volunteers could meet their special obligations at home, was also authorized by the last Congress, at the suggestion of the Commission. It has not yet gone into operation, and has probably been found impracticable to be carried out with the present organization of the volunteers.‡ Something was done by Congress also about the grand difficulty with the volunteers, their alleged disposition to take the most unfit men for officers. To this time, however, no method has been put in operation for subjecting either candidates or officers already elected, to an examination by those competent to judge of their qualifications; and officers who are not only notoriously ignorant, but who are notoriously bad men—bad men among bad men—are allowed to retain responsible commands. Are the difficulties in the way of remedying these evils of the volunteer system insurmountable?

The Secretary is every day called upon to give information to the surgeons of volunteer regiments, as to how they shall proceed in order to obtain the simplest medicines and other sup-

\* In the revised army regulations, issued since this report was written, two pages, out of two hundred and fifty, are devoted to "*volunteers and militia in the service of the United States.*" They relate exclusively to the recruiting, mustering in and mustering out, and payment of volunteers and militia.

† The Prince Napoleon is said to have observed, after visiting a camp at Washington, "What is here wasted would feast a French regiment." A considerable part of the food is, in fact, literally thrown away in most regiments.

‡ Inquiry was made, and such was the answer. There is now reason to hope, however, that the practical difficulties will be overcome, and the law go into effect.

plies necessary for the treatment of the commonest cases of camp disease.\*

This constant experience as to a matter which must be considered of vital importance to volunteers who are in the field, and exposed to all the vicissitudes of a life in the field, illustrates the grand fact of danger which everywhere presents itself.

If, at this period of the war, it is a necessary danger attending the employment of volunteers, then the conviction is irresistible that the present should be the last volunteers to be employed by the United States. If a remedy, if an alleviation of the evil can be found, its application is surely too long delayed.

Some reference must, in justice, here be made to the complaints received at this office from the volunteer surgeons, of the inadequacy of the government supplies for the sick. The Secretary admits that the volunteer surgeons are generally too much inclined to make inordinate requisitions and to keep cases under field-treatment which ought to be transferred to general hospitals; but if, as is stated, the force in the medical purveyors' warehouse is so small that, at this period of the war, the delay of a fortnight occurs in answering a surgeon's requisition for medicines—and this statement is understood to be admitted to be true—and if the supply of medicines in store is so limited that, without any inquiry as to the peculiar circumstances to meet which each requisition is made, he arbitrarily reduces the quantities, and varies the assortment of medicines supplied in each case, the Secretary cannot but think the Commission has a duty before it of a different kind to that with which it has hitherto occupied itself.

Another matter of complaint constantly addressed to the Secretary must be alluded to. It is, that patients far too ill to be properly kept in camp are often refused admittance to the general hospitals. Regimental surgeons being, as they assert, thus forced to keep a certain class of patients under canvas, call for various articles—wine, for instance—which otherwise it would not be thought proper to supply for camp use. In the majority of cases of this kind which have been investigated by the Secretary, the failure to get the patient into the general hospital has been owing to ignorance of the proper forms to be observed for that purpose. In not a few, however, it appears to

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\* According to the reports of the surgeons themselves to the Commission's Inspectors, 21 per cent. of the volunteer surgeons received their appointments and entered upon their duties without having been subjected to any official inquiry as to their medical qualifications or their knowledge of the army medical regulations.

have been because the hospitals were full. Considering the rapid increase of severe illness, which is liable to occur in an army; considering, too, the liability to battles, is it right that, under ordinary circumstances, the hospital accommodations of the army should become anywhere near exhausted? The Secretary feels it his duty to say that, regarding the question from an unprofessional point of view, but regarding it as he is confident ninety-nine in a hundred tax-paying citizens would regard it, the hospital preparations are yet manifestly inadequate and unsuitable for the volunteer army. Can it be right, for instance, that there should be but one surgeon and two young assistants to attend to from 160 to 180 patients, a large part of these being surgical cases or illness of a typhoid character? This is the case at Alexandria, with the disadvantage of buildings not intended for hospital purposes, and without the ordinary modern conveniences of even citizens' dwellings in northern towns.

The occasional very great unfitness of the surgeons for their posts is an evil which will be the subject of a special report to the Commission. It is alluded to here as being the chief cause of another great evil—the want of confidence in the regimental surgeons by their superior medical and other officers. This, at the present time, is painfully illustrated by the measures to which it has given rise to prevent improper discharges of invalids. A statement on this subject, just received, is as follows:

“There are men in this camp who, to my knowledge, have been held in suspense for weeks, and are dying by inches, because they cannot be released. They are unfit for duty, and have the surgeon's certificate that they are unfit for service, and probably ever will be, and yet the papers that have been forwarded have been held back. There is some clog in the wheel; what it is we do not know.

“Some of the men have been summoned before the medical board at Alexandria, but what can they know about the man I pointed out in the tent, who is made blind by the rush of blood to the head. In a short interview they can learn nothing. Yet he has been lying in the tent for weeks, perfectly unfit for duty.”

(Signed by a Chaplain of Volunteers.)

Is not the existence of this Commission based on an assumption of the insufficiency of the regular army organization to meet the wants of the volunteers; and if so, is it not the first duty of the Commission to inquire what those wants are, and advise the government how they can be regularly, systematically, and adequately provided for directly by government?

The Secretary confesses that it does not appear to him to be

right that certain offices for the volunteers, undertaken by the Commission, should rest on the uncertain means upon which the Commission is obliged to depend. When a man who has, through a patriotic impulse, volunteered to serve his country in the field of battle, falls dangerously ill, or has a leg shot off, he cannot feel that it is right that an adequate supply—a generous supply—of proper clothing, delicate and nourishing food, wine, surgical attendance, nursing, or of anything else which will materially contribute to a reasonable assurance of saving his life, should be dependent on the success of any number of persons who are obliged to solicit the means to procure these articles and these services as if for charity.

This is precisely the way in which the case stands at present. If it is not, the Commission is spending a great deal of energy, and a great number of benevolent persons throughout the country are laboring with it, for an unnecessary purpose.

In the judgment of the Secretary, the Commission should not be content with leaving this business where it is. Either the government should do a great deal more or the Commission should do a great deal more. To illustrate the matter as it stands :

The Commission, at its last session in Washington, had its attention called to the case of a man in one of the general hospitals who had just suffered amputation of a leg. As it was thought that his chances of recovery would be enhanced if he could be placed on a water bed, an article not included in the government hospital supplies, the Secretary was directed to procure one for him, which was done, by ordering it from New York. The surgeon in charge lately reported that, in his judgment, the man's life was saved by the water-bed. What constitutes a necessity of a military hospital, if this was not an instance of it? Six other water-beds have since been called for by different surgeons, each being required for special cases. Through the generosity of certain noble women in New York and on Staten Island, the Secretary has been able to promptly supply four of them. On telegraphing for the fifth, an answer was received that it would be necessary to wait for it to be manufactured, as the stock in store was exhausted.

Should such cases be dealt with only in this retail way?

The Secretary may be misinformed as to the value of water-beds. He may be equally mistaken as to intrinsic value of the thousands of other articles which he has supplied, at the request of the hospital surgeons, for the wounded and sick, during the last month. In that case the Commission is imposing upon the public in asking to be supplied with these articles, and in soliciting funds to purchase them. But if water-beds, for instance,

are ever a necessity in a military hospital, then, in the judgment of the Secretary, it was a national sin that there should have been not one such thing in the government stores at the breaking out of the war; and he can, at this period of the war, in no way justify a neglect to put hundreds of them within easy reach of the headquarters of every column of the army.

The proper function of the Commission, appears to the Secretary, in this case, to have been, on discovering the need of a water-bed, to procure it by the most ready means available, but to provide for future cases, by calling upon the government to at once supply not only this but every other proper appliance of the best of civil hospitals abundantly to every medical purveyor of the army.

The Secretary, with the greatest possible respect for the Commission and for the government, feels it necessary to urge this suggestion. If the government fails in its duty toward the volunteers, he is convinced that it is from no want of disposition to thoroughly execute their duty on the part of those who administer the government. Government is in the predicament which the master of a small craft would be, were he suddenly forced to take command of a ship-of-the-line, with a crew of green-horns, and no officers but those he had had on his little trader to assist him. There is great danger that habits formed on the coaster, and which were excellent habits for the coaster, will bring the liner to grief. Government depends for information and advice about the army, and the wants of the army, almost entirely on a class of gentlemen who have, for the greater part of their lives, been under a systematic training deliberately intended by the nation to make them adapt themselves to that which should be given them, and not to look out for that which would be best for them; deliberately intended to confine the energies of each of them to his own special responsibility. This has been the time-honored and much boasted policy of the country towards the army. An officer of the army or of the navy is disqualified for every legislative and administrative duty, except with reference to his own command; and for that, the limits within which his ambition may range have been more closely defined than those of a shop-boy's. For instance, a lieutenant colonel of the regular army is restricted by law in making his official memorandums and reports to the use, annually, of "one piece of red tape, the quarter of an ounce of waters, the quarter of a quire of envelope paper, 12 quills, or, in lieu thereof, 12 steel pens, and one pen holder," &c. The same close calculations and parsimonious spirit rule the medical regulations; and when you propose to a surgeon who has adapted his habits to them, that he shall call for the same degree of com-

fort for a sick soldier which you are accustomed to see offered a sick laborer in every respectable civil hospital, you will learn from his answer what the effect has been. No member of the Commission is without a sufficient experience of this kind.

To make the government dependent on the information that will be transmitted to it by regular officers, of the wants of the volunteer army, and to suppose that it will thus be able to anticipate these wants, and to make such timely and abundant provision for them, as the people expect at this time, is to depend on the fleetness of a horse that has been kept in fetters since he was a colt. These gentlemen—the Secretary says it with the most sincere and unqualified respect for them—these gentlemen cannot get over the habit of putting off every demand upon the government to the last moment, and of reducing every demand upon government to the least possible amount which will meet the immediate imperative necessities of carefully selected and thoroughly trained soldiers. The nation has always insisted that in that way they should do business, or not at all.

This the Secretary deems to be the true explanation of the false economy which had so manifestly been practised before the battle of Bull Run, and, so far as the army now suffers from mal-administration rather than bad laws, this still explains the most of it—this, and not an indisposition to provide adequately for the suppression of the rebellion on the part of the government. And hence he deems it proper, hence he deems it the first duty and the most important service which a body constituted as this has been, representing the feelings, the plans, the temper, and the demands of the people; constituted by government, and yet independent of the favor of government, and constituted by government for the express purpose of inquiry and advice, that it should freely consider and determine the wants of the army, and freely and frankly represent them to the government and to the people—to the government, that it may be led to endeavor to supply them; to the people, that they may the more heartily sustain the government in its efforts to supply them.

But if the Commission is not disposed to take this wide view of its duty, then the Secretary begs leave to urge, as the practical conclusion of this Report, that at least it is within its duty to advise the Government to adopt a much more liberal, thorough, and effective policy with reference to the medical department of the army; and if, finally, the Government cannot be induced to act what seems to the Secretary to be the proper part of a civilized Government towards its sick soldiers, then, he further urges that, unless the Commission has been going all wrong heretofore, it will unquestionably become its duty to undertake a far larger

business than its present organization is adapted to meet; and measures should at once be initiated to canvass the country for subscriptions to establish its treasury on a much stronger basis.

If, however, the Government, upon the representations of the Commission, shall be found ready to abundantly provide for the care of its sick and wounded soldiers and sailors, then the field of duty of the Commission may be correspondingly curtailed; its functions being mainly reduced to that of procuring statistics which will be of service to the world with reference to disease and mortality in war, and that of the preparation and distribution of information and advice calculated to improve the sanitary condition of the forces engaged.

It may be asked, why should not these duties be undertaken also by Government under its paid agents?

The answer is, with regard to procuring information, that a certain class of facts may be desirably investigated and classified by the Commission, which it does not necessarily come within the duty of a government to deal with. It is considered a part of the contract which government enters into with the soldiers that it shall provide water-beds and such like articles, if these are necessary for the saving of their life. Government is under no obligations to procure statistics, which would only have a general philanthropic value; and at such a crisis as the present, the heads of Government are supposed to be too much needed in meeting its immediate essential duties to undertake the responsible superintendence of measures of general philanthropy.

And with reference to the dissemination of information, the whole system of government in dealing with the army is based on the assumption that its officers are well informed in certain respects, and its privates in the main well drilled and disciplined. As has already been said, the Secretary questions if this system is not a mistaken one, where the volunteer army is concerned; but though it may be gradually somewhat modified, it cannot be entirely changed in a day nor a month; probably not during the present war. There is then, and there is to be, a large number of officers in the employment of government, who have had no means of informing themselves of the conditions of health of soldiers in camps, and a vast army of men, the preservation of whose health depends far more on their own prudence in certain respects than upon those safe-guards for which government relies solely upon discipline and acts of routine. Hence a field of operations exists which can only be entered in co-operation with government, and yet which cannot be fully occupied by government.

The Secretary has been thus particular in defining what he deems to be the possible duties of the Commission, because he

considers it is no longer right for the Commission to proceed on the supposition that it is meeting a wholly temporary emergency.

It should be determined, at this session of the Commission, if practicable, what duties shall be undertaken for the war; and the organization of the Commission, for all other purposes than these, should be wound up. Measures should also be taken to establish the organization of the Commission for the duties which it shall undertake for the war on a firm basis.

If the Commission is to undertake to meet the deficiencies of the government supply for the care of the sick and wounded, the government supply not being assuredly enlarged in its scope and variety, it should establish depots for this purpose at various points in the country, and should be prepared to use for this purpose a capital stock of at least \$50,000, and to be assured of a monthly revenue also for this purpose of \$5,000.

For the efficient performance of the other duties which have been indicated, it should be assured of a monthly revenue to continue without abatement during the war, of about \$4,000. This is on the supposition that the accommodations at present afforded the Commission by the Government continue to be enjoyed.

The Secretary respectfully requests determinate action, if practicable, at this session, upon these suggestions, and recommends the passage of the following resolutions:

*Resolved*, That the Committee of Inquiry be requested to prepare a report to the Commission on the moral and sanitary influences resulting in the demoralization observed among the troops of this department in the latter part of July.

*Resolved*, That the Committee of Inquiry be requested also to report how far the causes contributing to the demoralization of the troops still exist, and how far and in what way they may be modified or removed.

*Resolved*, That a special committee be appointed to visit the Surgeon General, the Medical Director, and the Medical Purveyor of the department of the Potomac, and report to the Commission what, if any, additional provisions of any kind are needed for the proper care of the sick and wounded of the army.

Respectfully,

FRED. LAW OLMSTED.

*Secretary.*

# APPENDIX.

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## BULL RUN.

### COMPARISON OF REGULARS AND VOLUNTEERS.

The following statement of the condition and conduct of a battalion of regulars, as compared with the volunteers generally, is furnished by Mr. Elliott in answer to the inquiry, *Precisely what advantages, if any, do the returns show to have been possessed by the regulars during and after the battle, as the result of their better discipline?* It is an important fact that one-half of the regulars were raw troops, having been under drill a shorter time than the volunteers, on an average. In the judgment of the regular officers, their chief advantage was in the circumstance that they were appointed to their duties, while the volunteer officers had been elected by the men whom they had to command, and over whom it was, consequently, impossible to exercise that determined control which is the first necessity of all successful military movements.

The returns yield the following information respecting the condition and conduct of Major Sykes' battalion of United States Infantry, which is here given at length, for the purpose of showing, as precisely as possible, the actual advantages of the more complete discipline of the regulars, as compared with that of the volunteers, so far as demonstrated in this engagement.

It appears that the battalion of United States Infantry under Major Sykes (the only infantry of regulars at Bull Run) marched twelve miles to the battle field on the morning of Sunday, July 21st; that no portion of this distance was at double-quick; that they breakfasted from their haversacks as they marched from Centreville; that, at eleven o'clock, during a halt, before the battle, on the bank of Bull Run, they had a regular meal; that their supply-wagon was not taken into the battle field, but was left at Centreville; that they were actively engaged, and were under fire from half past eleven a. m. to half past five p. m.; that they marched at double-quick only about five minutes, during a charge; that they gave no sign of exhaustion till they had been in the fire about an hour; that, then, they were taken by Major Sykes into a wood near by, and given ten or fifteen minutes rest, which did "great good;" that, during the fight, many were "terribly tired," but none fell out of the ranks; that but one man threw away his accoutrements, (and then, on return, himself ran away for fear of punishment;\*) that fifteen are known to be killed, twelve to be wounded, and ten missing; (the official report of Major Sykes announces thirteen killed, twenty wounded, of whom twelve are missing; and the surgeons who returned from Richmond about the 12th of August, report

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\* It was said that the instruments of most of the band were left behind, and that its members have since supplied themselves with new, at their own expense.

among the list of wounded prisoners the names of eleven who are believed to belong to this batallion;) that all who returned were able men the next morning, except three, who were on the sick list; that the wounded were removed from the field to the hospital as fast as they fell and could be obtained, and were there left; that the ambulance corps consisted of the hospital steward and attendants, two from each company, (not the band,) that the men were well fed that night (Sunday) at Centreville, from their provision wagon, which had there been left; that their blankets and haversacks were laid aside and stacked, in charge of a guard, (the band;) but returning by another route were left behind; that when the retreat commenced, the men were "calm and ready for work;" that "they retreated by order, to cover the retreat of the others;" that they left the field defending the rear of the retreating columns; were closely pursued by cavalry; went to Centreville, resting there for a short time; and that, accompanied by their provision wagon, they reached their camp at Arlington at half past ten a. m. on Monday, "in good order;" that the men experience no serious ill effects from the result of the battle—provoked and annoyed, but not discouraged; and that they are cheerful and animated. One-half of the number of these regulars were raw recruits, having been enlisted but three months.

So much for the experience and action of the regular infantry. Let us now, for comparison, consider the experience and course of the volunteers.

From the reports of inspectors under the Sanitary Commission, relative to twenty-eight of the regiments of volunteers, it appears that, as a general rule, the number of miles marched to the battle field on the morning of Sunday, the 21st of July, was about nine or ten, (not differing much from the distance marched by the regulars;) that from one to three miles of this distance was at double-quick, (no portion of this march of the regulars being at double-quick;) that the last regular meal before the battle, of about three-fourths of the troops, was on the evening of the day before the battle, the other fourth breakfasting before 2½ a. m. of the 21st, (the last meal of the regulars being at eleven o'clock on the day of the battle, in the woods near the battle field;) that the men breakfasted from their haversacks, as they marched; the haversacks, in consequence of the negligence of the regimental officers, or the negligence or improvidence of the men themselves, not being uniformly supplied with a sufficiency; that the canteens were ordered to be filled with water on commencing the march, but that the drink of the men during the day was mainly "muddy water" (roadside supply;) that they suffered much from thirst; and that, in passing streams of pure water, they were not in certain cases permitted to stop and fill their canteens; (it does not appear that the regulars suffered from thirst before engaging in battle;) that the supply wagons followed the volunteers nearly to the field of battle, but not leaving, it is believed, the traveled road, (the wagon of the regulars was left at Centreville, a distance from the battle-field of several miles;) that there were frequent marches at double quick upon the battle-field; that those of the troops who were actively engaged were constantly engaged for several hours, (say from three to four hours,) unrelieved by periods of rest, or by fresh troops from the reserves to take their places, when sensibly fatigued or exhausted, (the regulars, it will be recollected, after being actively engaged about an hour, retired for rest into the woods for ten or fifteen minutes, thereby giving great

relief to the wearied troops;) that several of the regiments are said to have been thoroughly exhausted and conquered before reaching the field, in consequence of the rapid march and the insufficiency of their supplies of food and drink; that, as evidences of exhaustion, some lagged behind, others were sun-struck, and others brought to the surgeon in convulsions; that, however, in general, the exhaustion was less apparent upon the field when actively engaged than just before the engagement, and just after its termination—their “courage” and “the excitement” supporting them while the conflict lasted; that, when marching at double-quick, on approaching the field, many of the men threw away their blankets and haversacks, some of the troops themselves falling by the roadside overcome; that on reaching the field, blankets and haversacks were, in general, deposited under guard—some regiments, however, throwing them aside without reference to a guard; that, in respect to twenty of these twenty-eight regiments visited, (the twenty comprising about 15,800 men,) there are reported to have been from 2,215 to 2,462 killed, wounded, and missing, (the inquiries by the inspectors were mostly made during the interval from the 25th to the 31st, inclusive, of July;) that very few, if any, who returned were able men the next morning; that the wounded were many of them taken from the field to the hospital, (a stone church near,) and that, generally, the wounded were left either at the hospital or on the field; that the surgeons were, in general, efficient while they remained, and that several of the surgeons remained with the wounded, and were taken prisoners, the majority of them, however, returning with the main body of the army; that the regiments were generally, though not universally, poorly supplied with ambulances, (many having none;) that the band as a rule did not perform the duty of ambulance corps; that the men were badly fed that night and the following day, many having nothing to eat; that in the hurry of retreat, blankets and haversacks were in most cases left behind, as also the wagons of provision and ammunition, (the regulars, it will be recollected, obtained on retreat a supply of food from their wagon at Centreville, which was afterwards returned safely with them to camp;) that the men left the field exhausted, depressed, irresolute, and it is doubtful whether the depression was most due to the defeat, or to the physical exhaustion arising from over fatigue, and extreme thirst and hunger; that the retiring and exhausted combatants were not encouraged and reassured by a systematic and judicious advance of reserves of calm and vigorous troops to their relief, and to defend their retreat, (such retreat being but partially protected;) that their sufferings on retreat, in physique and morale, exhausted as they already were by hunger and thirst and fatigue, and by the consciousness of defeat, and urged on, as some of them were, by vague fear—that most enervating of incentives—a retreat continued without sleep or food or cessation for a distance of not less than twenty-seven miles in a semi-hostile country—were vastly greater than their previous sufferings from all depressing and dispiriting influences combined; and that, in each regiment, there are some who are still dispirited and demoralized; others who are cheerful, animated, and ready for a renewal of the conflict; and still others who are fast regaining health and spirits under the recuperative influences of rest, improved diet, recreation, and judicious discipline.

Mr. Elliott presents the following estimate, from evidence in his hands, of the

PROBABLE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE TWO ARMIES.

From a close observation of the work of the Sanitary Commission; a perusal of the reports of the inspectors, received daily, and a frequent conference with the inspectors, a very exact knowledge is had of the present condition of the army of the Union. A judgment of the condition of the rebel army rests on the scattered evidence contained in Southern newspapers, and in certain private letters received from the South, and in the reports of prisoners, Union men escaping from the enemy, and deserters. It appears that at no time has the rebel army been nearly as well provided as those of the Union; it has suffered much more from disease; and in this respect the work of the Sanitary Commission itself is an element of no small importance in the advantage possessed by the national forces.

Both armies were *disappointed* in the late contest. Ours that in consequence of our own *folly*, while victors, we were routed, panic stricken. Their's because it was, step by step, repulsed by an enemy whom it believed would not *fight*. The cause of our disappointment was *unsubstantial* and temporary; the cause of their disappointment was real and permanent.

Our army is rapidly convalescent, and has nearly recovered; their recovery will doubtless prove much less complete.

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The following official report of Major Henry J. Hunt has never before been printed. Major Hunt, as will be seen, occupied a position favorable to observation on the extreme left, and having been at rest during the greater part of the battle, his report contains a clearer account of certain circumstances of the battle than any which has hitherto been published.

LIGHT BATTERY M, 2D ARTILLERY,

CAMP NEAR FORT ALBANY, July 25, 1861.

Capt. J. B. FRY, A. A. G.

SIR: I have the honor to submit a report of the operations of my battery on the 21st instant.

The company arrived at New York on the 12th instant from Fort Pickens, Fla., with its battery, but without horses. A large portion of the men were recruits, and no opportunity for instruction as field artillery had been afforded them. The company reached Washington by rail on Sunday, the 14th, and on Wednesday morning the battery, which came by sea, was received at the Arsenal. Necessary repairs and refitting were at once commenced; ammunition and other stores drawn and packed; horses procured; and on Friday, the 19th, we marched from Capitol Hill to Col. Richardson's position in front of the enemy's works at Blackburn's ford, a distance of 28 miles. Saturday was devoted to instructing the recruits, shocing horses, &c.; and on that evening Lieut. Platt's section was detached to join the advanced guard. On Saturday night, Lieut. Edwards, 3d artillery, reported to me with a section of two heavy rifled guns. On Sunday morning, the 21st, Lieut. Thompson's section was

placed in position on the right of the main road overlooking the ford, and commanding the road by which the enemy's advance was looked for. A few shells were, by direction of Col. Richardson, dropped into the woods and amongst the buildings which were supposed to contain the enemy, but no answer was returned, and the firing ceased. Soon after this, an infantry column was seen pushing into the wood skirting Bull run. Lieut. Thompson moved forward a piece, and after a few rounds they disappeared. At about 10 a. m. Col. Miles ordered both sections of my battery to the extreme left, occupied by Davies' brigade. Edwards' section had been sent early in the morning to that position, from which he had opened his fire upon the woods and houses in front. I transmit herewith his report of the operations of his section, in which he describes the nature of the ground.

The firing was continued at intervals by the whole battery "as a demonstration," but produced little or no effect, as there was no definite object, except when the enemy's moving columns came from time to time within our range. We were supported by two infantry battalions drawn up in line behind the battery.

On inquiry, made immediately after my arrival on the ground, I was informed that a brigade of infantry was posted in the wood to our left and rear, commanding a deep and wide ravine on our left flank, and watching the road beyond it, which leads from below the ford to Centreville; and as we had skirmishers pushed forward into the ravine, I felt no apprehension of danger from that quarter, but still requested, as a precaution, that the battalion on the left should be formed on the brink of the ravine, and in column, so that it might be readily deployed to front in any direction. No attention was paid to this request, and the regiment remained in line.

About  $4\frac{1}{2}$  or 5 p. m., after the battle was apparently gained on the right, and whilst large reinforcements of infantry and cavalry were observed hurrying up from the direction of Manassas, a strong force of infantry and some cavalry, variously estimated at from 2,000 to 5,000 men in all, appeared on our left, approaching parallel to our front by the lateral openings into the great ravine on our flank. The infantry only was first seen, and as they approached without any apparent attempt at concealment, preceded by our skirmishers, they were supposed to be our own troops. As the numbers increased I rode down the ravine with my first sergeant to reconnoitre them. Some of our skirmishers stated that they had seen no troops; others said they were the 34th New Yorkers coming in. They carried no colors, and their numbers increasing to an alarming extent, I hurried back and changed the front of the battery, so as to command all the openings into the ravine, and the approaches to our position. Col. Davies, at the same time, detached a couple of companies into the ravine as skirmishers. The latter had scarcely deployed when a sharp rattle of musketry removed all doubts as to the character of the advancing troops. We had been surprised, and the enemy was close upon us in large force. Our infantry regiment had changed front with the battery, but unfortunately closed their intervals behind it. Precious time was now lost in getting them on our flanks. Had they remained in our rear, they would have been unnecessarily exposed to the fire directed on the battery; and in case of a determined charge for our

capture, which I confidently expected, they would have been apt to fire through us, destroying men and horses, and crippling the guns. At length they were moved to the right and left, and ordered to lie down and await the approach of the enemy, who by this time were closing up in apparently overwhelming numbers. I now directed the gunners to prepare shrapnel and canister shot, and in case the enemy persisted in his advance, not to lose time in sponging the pieces—for minutes were now of more value than arms—but to aim low, and pour in a rapid fire wherever the men were thickest or were seen advancing. The enemy having by this time completed his preparations, and driven in our skirmishers, now rushed forward and opened a heavy musketry fire on the battery; but from the shortness of range, or from aiming upwards as they ascended the ravine, their shots mostly passed over us. The command was then given to the battery to fire. Under the directions of Lieuts. Platt and Thompson, 2d artillery, and Edwards, 3d artillery, commanding sections, the most rapid, well-sustained, and destructive fire I have ever witnessed was now opened. The men took full advantage of the permission to omit sponging, yet no accident occurred from it. The guns were all of large calibre, two 20-pdr. Parrott rifle guns, and four light 12-pounders, and they swept the field with a perfect storm of canister. No troops could stand it, and the enemy broke and fled in every direction, taking refuge in the woods and ravines, and in less than fifteen minutes not a living man could be seen on the ground, which so recently had swarmed with them. The infantry regiments had not found it necessary to fire a single shot.

Believing now that there was no support on the left, (original rear,) I executed a flank movement, so as to bring the left of the battery close to the wood, and in front of the lateral road by which it had reached the ground. This movement threw the regiment on our left into the wood, and thus secured its possession. The fire was now re-opened; the rifle guns throwing shell, and the others round shot, so as to sweep the wood and reach the ravines into which the enemy had been driven.

In a few minutes orders were given to retreat; and I sent an officer to Col. Davis to inquire if such were his directions; that the enemy were defeated, and that they would be unable to reform. The answer returned was, "to retire at once on Centreville." The pieces were limbered up, and, Lieutenant Edwards' guns leading, moved off. Scarcely was the column in the road when a scattering fire was opened on the rear, doubtless by those who, having taken refuge in the wood, observed the withdrawal of our troops. The cry to the battery *to trot*, was now clamorously raised from the rear, and confusion was fast spreading, when I directed a deliberate walk should be maintained, and pushed forward myself to the place where the ambulances and wagons were standing in the main road.

The teamsters had taken the alarm from the rapid firing and the cries, and a panic was rapidly growing, when my assurances of our having beaten the enemy, and that there was no necessity for hurry, together with the appearance of the head of the battery emerging at a walk from the wood, reassured them, and calmed the excitement.

The whole column now retired in good order, and was formed, together with

all the disposable field artillery, in front of Centreville, under the immediate direction of General McDowell, in person, and in so imposing an attitude as to deter the enemy from any advance in that direction, and to hold him completely in check.

During the night, the troops were put in motion for their former camp on the Potomac. Barry's battery, under Lieut. Tidball, and my own, were the last we could perceive on the ground. Just as I was leaving, I received a message from Colonel Richardson, stating that his brigade was drawn up in column on the road, and that he wished me to pass him with the battery, but to remain near him, and that we would constitute the rear guard. This was accordingly done, but a mass of stragglers collected around the guns, and could not be prevailed upon to pass them, or move without them. I was thus constrained to move forward, until some 2,000 or 3,000 men interposed between us, when I received a message from Col. R. stating that a force of the enemy's cavalry and horse artillery was in our rear, and threatening an attack. I now drew up at the side of the road—to turn back in such a crowd was impossible—and only by representing that the rear was about being attacked, could I urge them forward. On Col. Richardson coming up, he stated that the demonstration of the enemy was very feeble, and we saw them no more. It is but just to say that the disorder and mob-like mixture of the volunteers did not appear to proceed from fear, but from sheer fatigue. They were foot-sore, lame, hungry, and tired, but seemed to be in good heart; and on my representing that it was important that a certain position in our advance should be occupied, some of Blenker's German and of Montgomery's New Jersey regiments, formed in good order, and took the position indicated. Had we been attacked by any force, I have little doubt that a stout resistance would have been made.

The officers of the battery, Lieuts. E. R. Platt, and James Thompson, 2d artillery, commanding sections, performed all the duties devolved upon them with promptness, skill, and gallantry. Their labors in bringing the battery into good condition had been untiring, and to the thoroughness of the instruction they had imparted to their sections before they were dismounted in Texas, is mainly attributable the efficiency with which the pieces were served on the field, and the successful result of the action.

First Lieutenant Presley O. Craig, 2d artillery, on sick leave, on account of a badly sprained foot, which prevented his marching with his own company, having heard of the sickness of my second lieutenant, volunteered for the performance of the duties, and joined the battery the day before it left Washington. He was constantly and actively employed during the night preceding, and on the day of the battle, and his services were very valuable. When the enemy appeared, he exerted himself in perfecting the preparations to receive him, and conducted himself with the greatest gallantry when the onset was made. He fell early in the action, whilst in the active discharge of his duty, receiving a shot in his forehead, and dying in a few minutes afterwards. This was the only casualty in the battery.

Cadet John R. Meigs, of the U. S. Military Academy, being in Washington on furlough, also volunteered his services, and was employed actively from the time he joined at Washington until the close of the battle. On the death



of Lieut. Craig, Cadet Meigs performed his duties until the close of the action, with spirit and intelligence, and was very useful after the affair was over, in conveying orders, observing the enemy, and rallying our troops.

Lieut. Edwards commanded his section with skill and efficiency; and I can endorse the favorable report he makes of his Lieuts., Benjamin and Babbitt, and of the conduct of his men.

The behavior of the men of my battery was all that could be desired. They were cool, collected, prompt, and obedient, and not an instance of misconduct or neglect occurred during the action in the whole battery. The first sergeant, Terence Rielly, was very efficient, as were also the chiefs of pieces, sergeants Smith, Pfeffer, Flood, and Relinger.

A detachment of twenty recruits, under Lieut. Brisbane, had been dispatched from Carlisle barracks to fill up my company. Lieut. B. did not reach Washington until after we had left, but he followed us up, and sought us on the field. He did not succeed in finding the battery, but employed his men usefully in endeavoring to stop the retreat of our forces, and in resisting the pursuit of the enemy. In the performance of these duties he was twice wounded. He speaks favorably of the services of sergeants Bowman and Rogers, of his detachment.

Respectfully, your ob't servant,

HENRY J. HUNT,

*Bvt. Maj. 2d Art'y, Comdg. Lt. Co. M.*



